THE ETERNALS

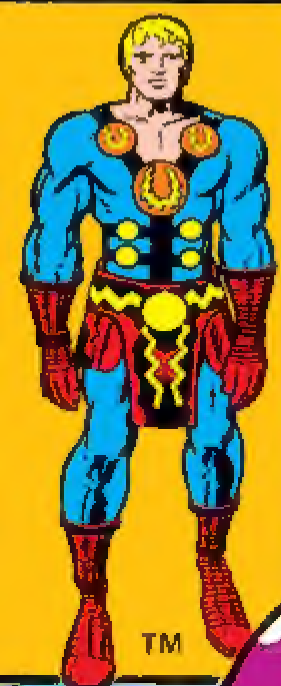
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WHEN GODS WALK THE EARTH!

THE ETERNALS™

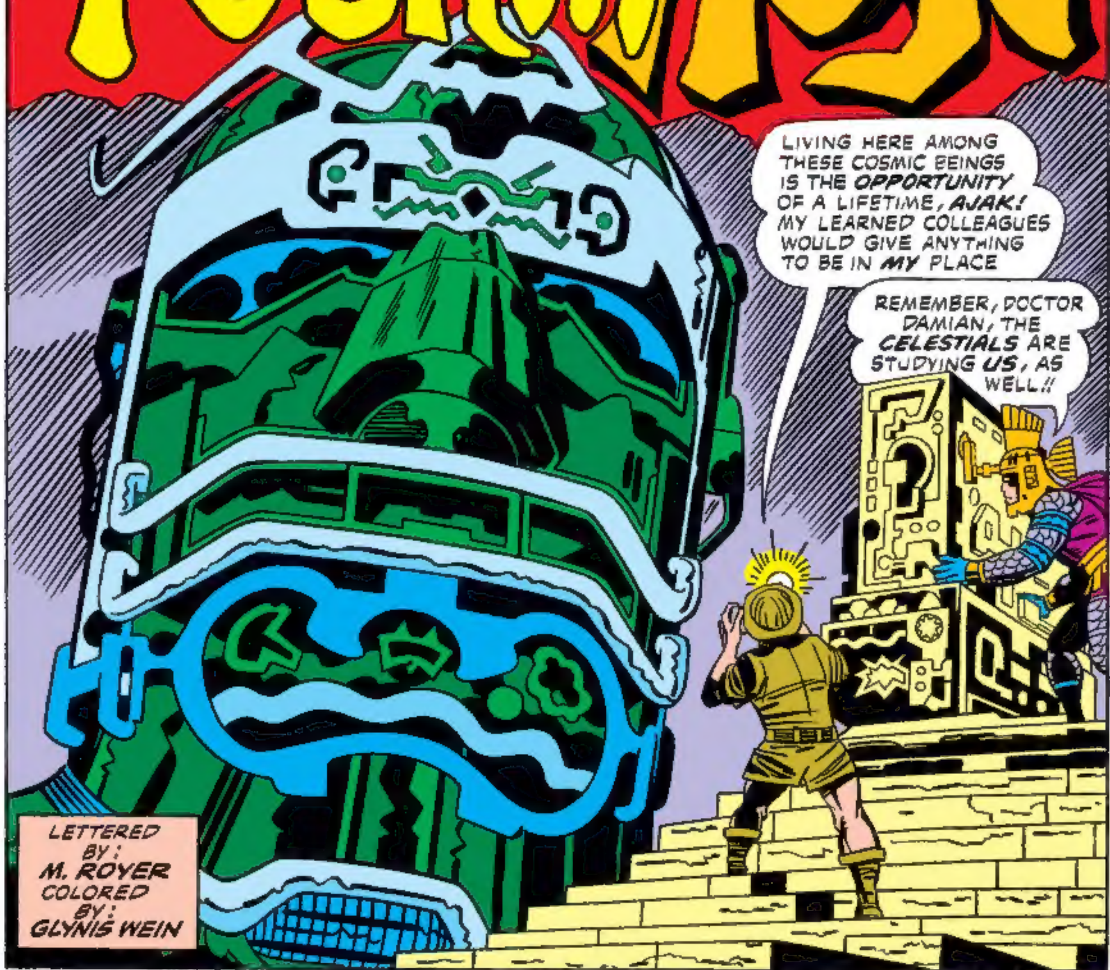


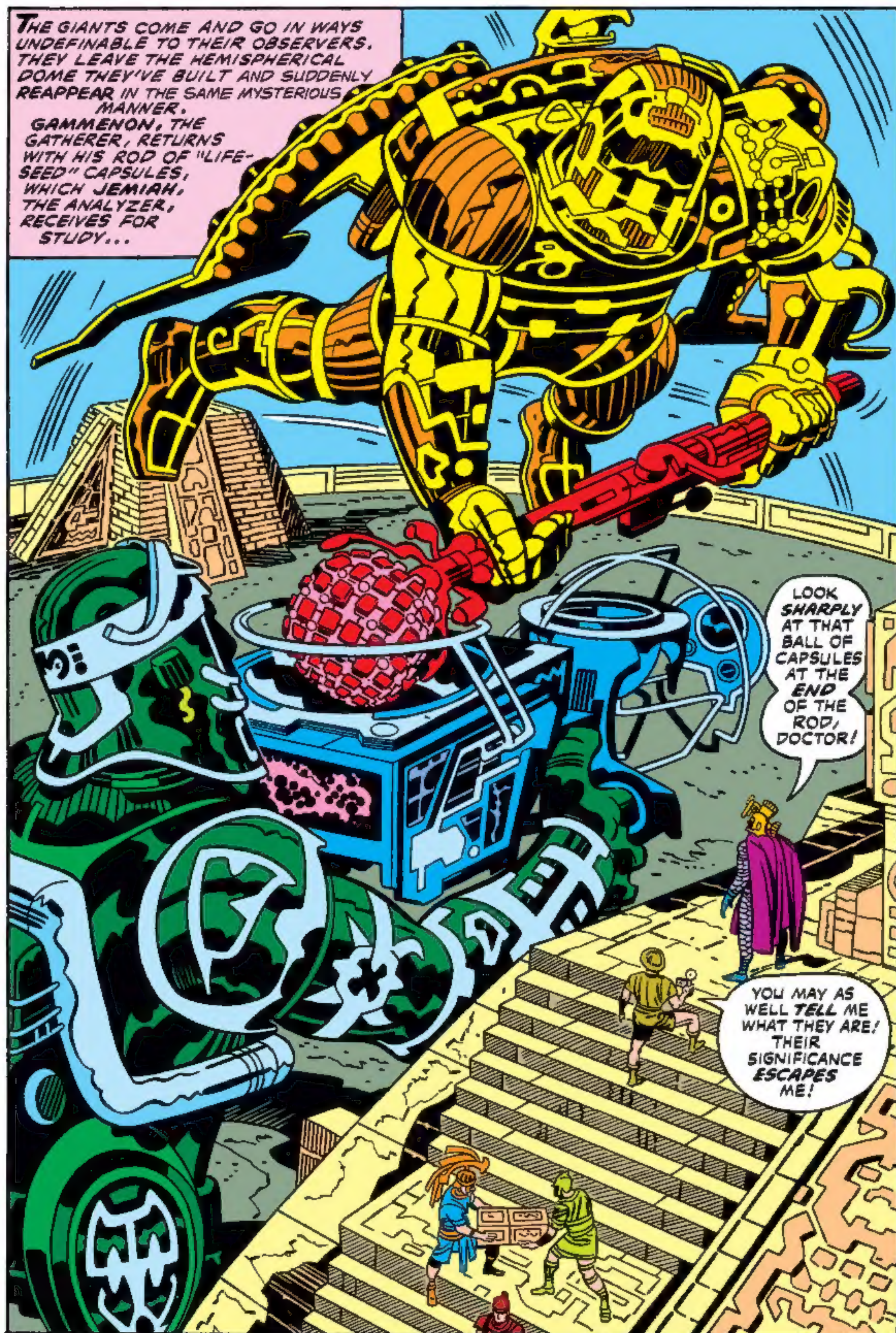
STAN LEE PRESENTS: **THE ETERNALS!**™

EDITED, WRITTEN AND DRAWN BY: JACK KIRBY • INKED AND ENJOYED BY: MICHAEL ROYER

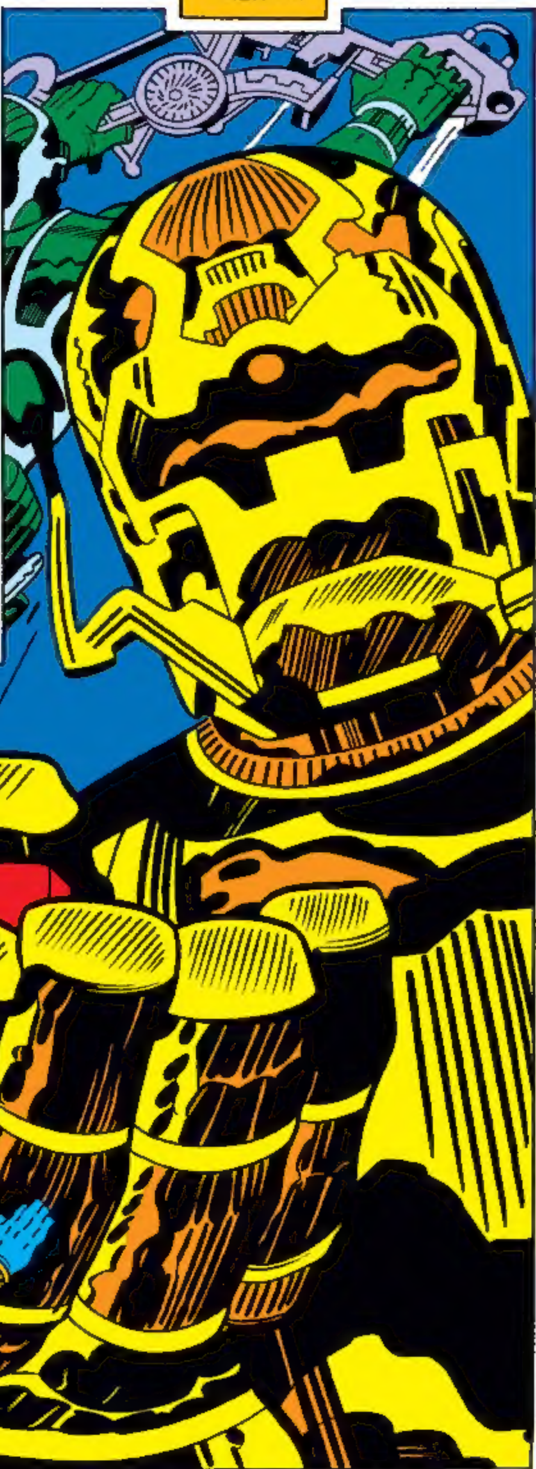
WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THEY CAME BACK!!? THE ANCIENT CARVINGS OF THE INCAS NOT ONLY LEFT A RECORD OF THE SPACE GODS, BUT ALSO PREDICTED THEIR RETURN TO EARTH... IN THIS MAGAZINE THE PREDICTION COMES TRUE!!! A MASSIVE SPACE VEHICLE HAS ESTABLISHED A BASE ON A BROAD PLAIN IN THE ANDES MOUNTAINS... AND NOW, AMID THE INCA RUINS... GIANTS WALK!! --AWESOME BEINGS-- WITH A PURPOSE THAT COULD DECIDE THE FATE OF ALL HUMANITY!!!

THE FOURTH HOST



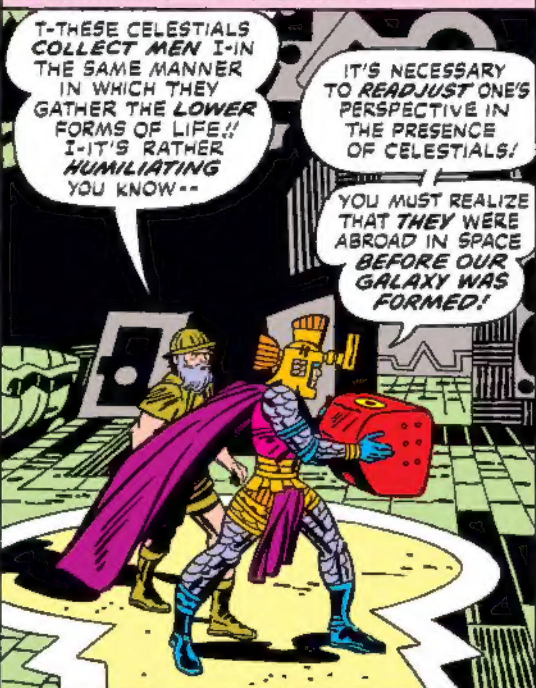

THE GIANTS COME AND GO IN WAYS UNDEFINABLE TO THEIR OBSERVERS. THEY LEAVE THE HEMISPHERICAL DOME THEY'VE BUILT AND SUDDENLY REAPPEAR IN THE SAME MYSTERIOUS MANNER.
GAMMENON, THE GATHERER, RETURNS WITH HIS ROD OF "LIFE-SEED" CAPSULES, WHICH JEMIAH, THE ANALYZER, RECEIVES FOR STUDY...
LOOK SHARPLY AT THAT BALL OF CAPSULES AT THE END OF THE ROD, DOCTOR!
YOU MAY AS WELL TELL ME WHAT THEY ARE! THEIR SIGNIFICANCE ESCAPES ME!


THE CELESTIALS CALL THE CAPSULES "LIFE-SEEDS". IN SHORT, DOCTOR THOSE CAPSULES ARE THE STORED ATOMS OF LIVING ORGANISMS!!
GAMMENON HAS BEEN GATHERING SAMPLES OF THE LOCAL ANIMAL AND PLANT LIFE!
I-IS IT POSSIBLE THAT SOME OF THOSE CAPSULES MAY BE THE COMPACTED ATOMS OF HUMAN BEINGS?!

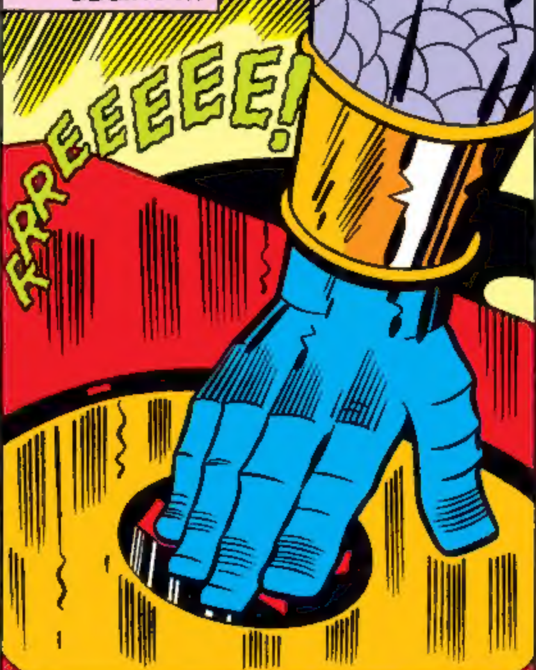

THE MASSIVE FORM OF GAMMENON SLOWLY WHEELS TO FACE THE TINY ONLOOKERS. DOCTOR DAMIAN RECOILS AS THE GIANT'S SHADOW FALLS UPON THE INCA PYRAMID. HIS LOWERING ARM HOVERS LIKE A SUSPENDED MOUNTAIN! HIS FINGERS CLUTCH A CAPSULE WHICH IS HELD OUT TO THE MEN...

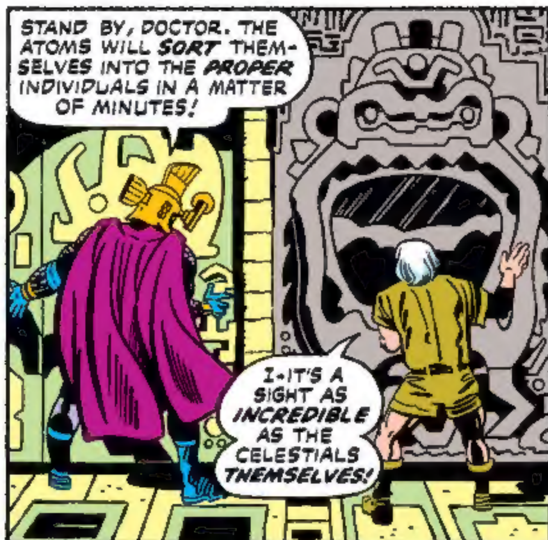

H-HE'S OFFERING ONE OF THE CAPSULES TO US!! I-I WONDER-!!
NEVER QUESTION OR REFUSE A CELESTIAL... ACCEPT THEM AS YOU WOULD THE WHIMSIES OF FATE!

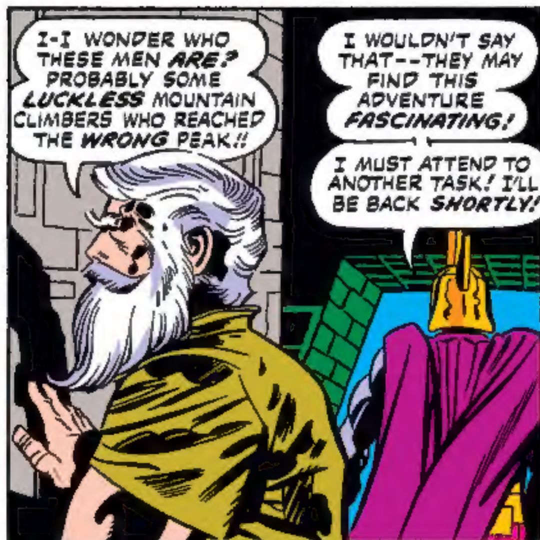

GAMMENON'S PALM OPENS AND RELEASES THE CAPSULE TO THE FAITHFUL LITTLE ADUUM, WHO KNOWS THAT IT CONTAINS THE ATOMS OF ITS KIND! THE INTELLIGENCE OF THE ADUUM ON THIS PLANET IS A NEVER-ENDING MARVEL...
I THANK YOU, GREAT CELESTIAL! IF IT IS YOUR WISH THAT I RECONSTRUCT THE ATOMS OF THESE MEN, THEN IT SHALL BE DONE
YOUR PURPOSE IS BENEVOLENT AND ABOVE QUESTION.
GOOD HEAVENS! YOU MEAN THAT THING CONTAINS-??


ADUUM IS THE CELESTIALS' WORD FOR "MAN"! MAN THE HUMAN-- MAN THE DEVIANT AND THE SPECIES KNOWN AS THE ETERNALS IT IS AJAK THE ETERNAL WHO HAS LEARNED TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE INCA SPACE GODS!!!
T-THESE CELESTIALS COLLECT MEN I-IN THE SAME MANNER IN WHICH THEY GATHER THE LOWER FORMS OF LIFE!! I-IT'S RATHER HUMILIATING YOU KNOW--
IT'S NECESSARY TO READJUST ONE'S PERSPECTIVE IN THE PRESENCE OF CELESTIALS!
YOU MUST REALIZE THAT THEY WERE ABROAD IN SPACE BEFORE OUR GALAXY WAS FORMED!

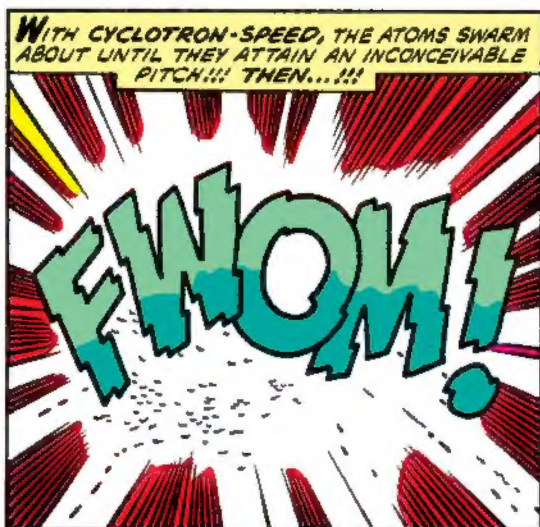

SOON, IN ONE OF THE CHAMBERS OF THE INCA PYRAMID...
WELL, IT WON'T TAKE LONG TO REASSEMBLE OUR NEW GUESTS!
IT MAY TAKE LONGER TO CALM THEM DOWN!


DEALING WITH HUMANS HAS ALWAYS BEEN A TOUCHY TASK, BUT AJAK DETERMINES TO TAKE IT IN STRIDE! HE PRESSES THE CAPSULE-ACTIVATOR AND THE ATOMIC REASSEMBLING PROCESS BEGINS...
FRREEEEEE!


STAND BY, DOCTOR. THE ATOMS WILL SORT THEMSELVES INTO THE PROPER INDIVIDUALS IN A MATTER OF MINUTES!
I-IT'S A SIGHT AS INCREDIBLE AS THE CELESTIALS THEMSELVES!

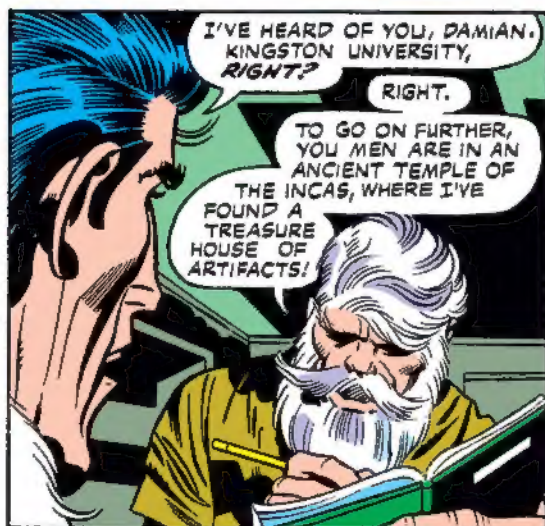

I-I WONDER WHO THESE MEN ARE? PROBABLY SOME LUCKLESS MOUNTAIN CLIMBERS WHO REACHED THE WRONG PEAK!!
I WOULDN'T SAY THAT--THEY MAY FIND THIS ADVENTURE FASCINATING!
I MUST ATTEND TO ANOTHER TASK! I'LL BE BACK SHORTLY!


MEANWHILE, BEHIND THE CHAMBER DOOR, THE CAPSULE RAPIDLY DISSOLVES IN THE DAZZLING 'FIRE OF' ATOM-FLOW...
RRREEEEE!!


WITH CYCLOTRON-SPEED, THE ATOMS SWARM ABOUT UNTIL THEY ATTAIN AN INCONCEIVABLE PITCH!!! THEN...!!!
FWOM!

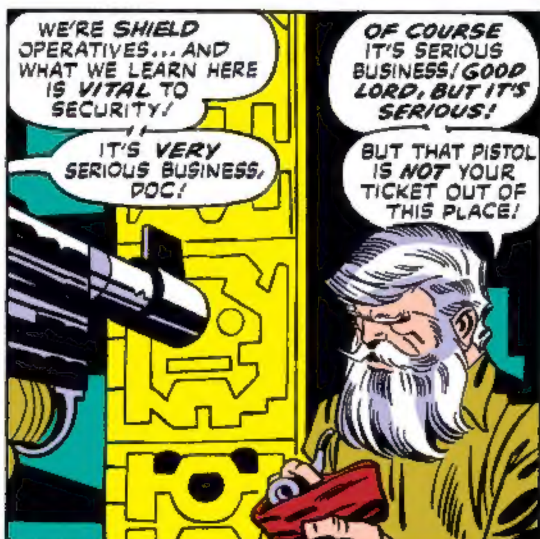

THE NEXT MOMENT, THREE DAZED MEN STAND IN THE CHAMBER'S CENTER, TRYING TO MARSHALL THEIR SENSES...
TYLER! PARKS! Y-YOU GUYS OKAY?
STEVENSON! WHERE ARE WE?
AND WHERE IS THAT GIANT ALIEN!?

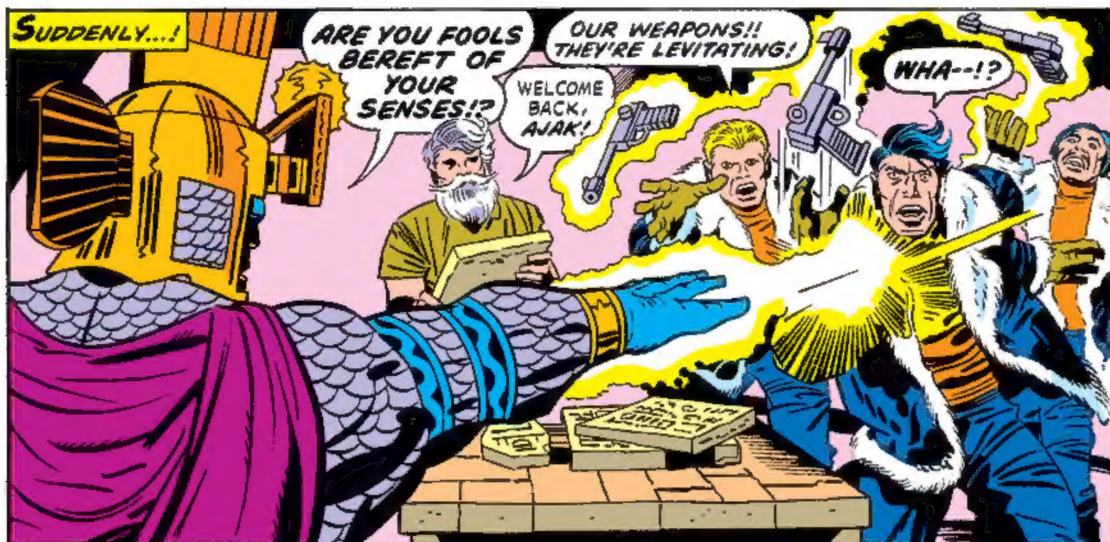

THE MEN OPEN THE CHAMBER DOOR AND FIND DOCTOR DAMIAN!
STEVENSON! LOOK!
A MAN! A PROFESSOR TYPE IF EVER I SAW ONE.
THERE'S NO SIGN OF THE GIANT!!
GENTLEMEN, GENTLE-MEN! YOU MUST BE BURSTING WITH QUESTIONS... BUT FIRST, BE ASSURED THAT YOU'RE NOT IN ANY DANGER...
I'M DOCTOR DANIEL DAMIAN. I AM AN ARCHAEO-LOGIST!


I'VE HEARD OF YOU, DAMIAN. KINGSTON UNIVERSITY, RIGHT?
RIGHT.
TO GO ON FURTHER, YOU MEN ARE IN AN ANCIENT TEMPLE OF THE INCAS, WHERE I'VE FOUND A TREASURE HOUSE OF ARTIFACTS!


DON'T FENCE WITH US. WE'RE INSIDE THE BASE OF THE GIANT ALIENS, AREN'T WE!?
YES... WE ARE. BUT DON'T BE TOO CERTAIN THAT THE CELESTIALS ARE AS ALIEN TO THIS PLANET AS YOU THINK!

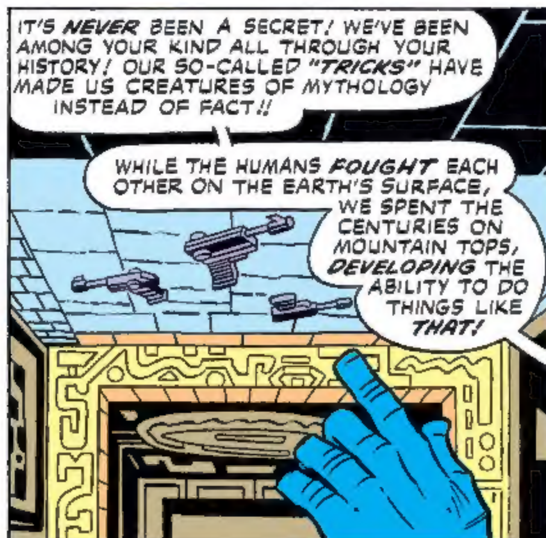

TELL US MORE, DOC! TELL US ALL YOU KNOW ABOUT THESE SPACE GIANTS!
THEN YOU'RE GOING TO SHOW US HOW TO LEAVE THIS PLACE WITH THE INFORMATION!
--UNDERSTAND, DOC?


WE'RE SHIELD OPERATIVES... AND WHAT WE LEARN HERE IS VITAL TO SECURITY!
IT'S VERY SERIOUS BUSINESS, DOC!
OF COURSE IT'S SERIOUS BUSINESS! GOOD LORD, BUT IT'S SERIOUS!
BUT THAT PISTOL IS NOT YOUR TICKET OUT OF THIS PLACE!


SUDDENLY...!
ARE YOU FOOLS BEREFT OF YOUR SENSES!?
WELCOME BACK, AJAK!
OUR WEAPONS!! THEY'RE LEVITATING!
WHA--!?


H-HE LOOKS LIKE ONE OF THOSE OLD INCA GODS -- COME TO LIFE!
ALLAY YOUR FEARS AND SUSPICIONS, HUMANS. WEAPONS ARE USELESS HERE. AN OPEN MIND WOULD SERVE YOU BETTER!
AFTER THAT TRICK, WE'RE WILLING TO LISTEN.


THEN LISTEN! I AM AJAK, AN ETERNAL!! MY SPECIES, LIKE YOURS, IS NATIVE TO EARTH. BUT WE LIVE LONGER THAN YOU. IN FACT, WE CANNOT DIE!
IF YOUR SPECIES DEVELOPED ON EARTH, IT'S BEEN THE GREATEST KEPT SECRET OF ALL TIME!
JUMPING CATFISH!!

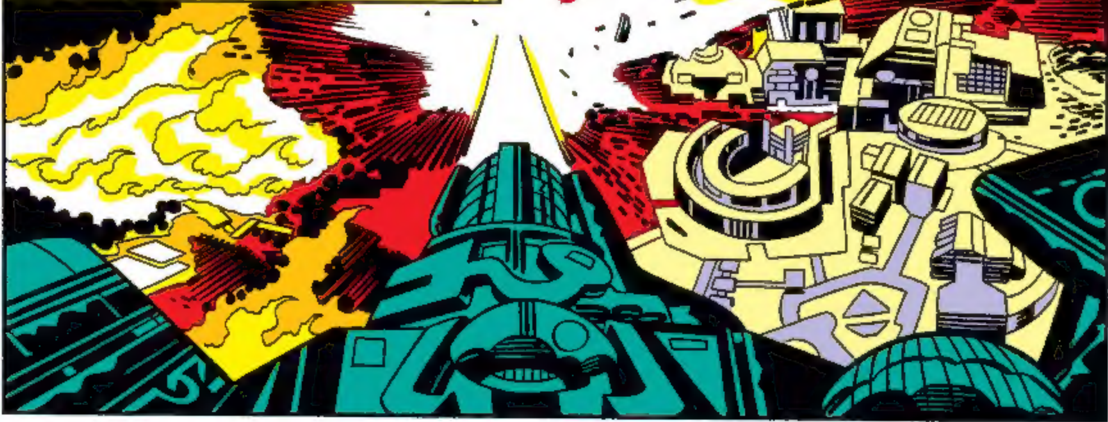

IT'S NEVER BEEN A SECRET! WE'VE BEEN AMONG YOUR KIND ALL THROUGH YOUR HISTORY! OUR SO-CALLED "TRICKS" HAVE MADE US CREATURES OF MYTHOLOGY INSTEAD OF FACT!!
WHILE THE HUMANS FOUGHT EACH OTHER ON THE EARTH'S SURFACE, WE SPENT THE CENTURIES ON MOUNTAIN TOPS, DEVELOPING THE ABILITY TO DO THINGS LIKE THAT!

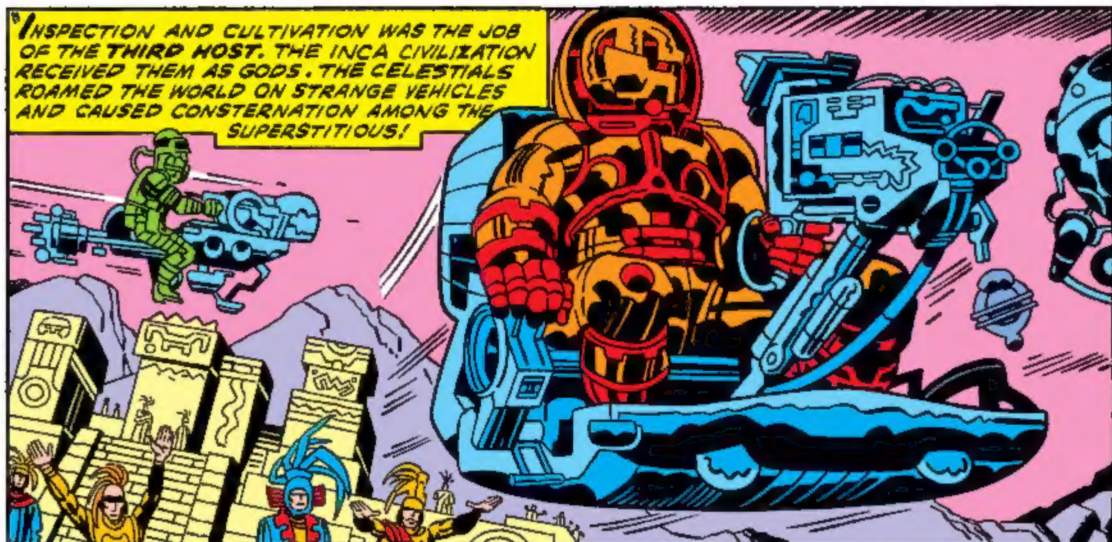

IT'S ALL VERY INTERESTING, AJAK! BUT OUR ASSIGN-MENT IS TO GET FACTS ABOUT THE SPACE GIANTS AND CLEAR OUT!
AS A HUMAN BEING I'VE GOT TO WARN YOU THAT THIS IS NOT THE PLACE OR TIME FOR FOOL HEROICS!
AS AN AMERICAN, DAMIAN, YOU'VE GOT TO HELP US!
HE'S RIGHT, YOU KNOW!


DON'T YOU SEE WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO TELL YOU? WE'RE NOT CAPABLE OF MEASURING THE MIGHT OF THE CELESTIALS!! THEY ARE DOWNRIGHT INVINCIBLE!!
THEIR KIND IS AS OLD AS THE STARS!! THEIR HOME IS THE VAST UNIVERSE!

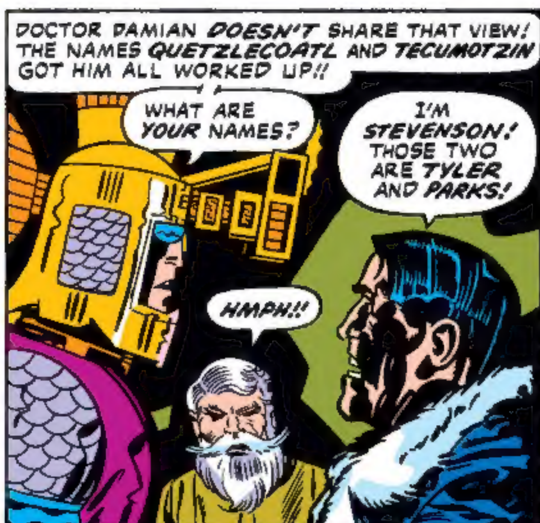

AS AN ETERNAL, I CAME HERE AMONG THE INCAS WHEN THEY WERE A GREAT POWER! I STAYED TO WITNESS THE ARRIVAL OF A CELESTIAL HOST ON EARTH.
AND WHEN THEY LEFT... I'D LEARNED MUCH--YET STILL VERY LITTLE...


"THE CELESTIALS VISIT A PLANET IN FOUR HOSTS. THE FIRST CAME TO EARTH BEFORE THERE WERE MEN UPON IT... BUT THEY DID FIND OUR COMMON ANCESTOR, WHO BECAME SUBJECT TO THEIR EXPERIMENTS...


"WRATH AND DISCIPLINE MARKED THE COMING OF THE SECOND HOST! MANY CIVILIZATIONS SPAWNED IN THE DIM PAST VANISHED, FORCING MAN TO CLIMB AGAIN IN NEW DIRECTIONS!


INSPECTION AND CULTIVATION WAS THE JOB OF THE THIRD HOST. THE INCA CIVILIZATION RECEIVED THEM AS GODS. THE CELESTIALS ROAMED THE WORLD ON STRANGE VEHICLES AND CAUSED CONSTERNATION AMONG THE SUPERSTITIOUS!


STRANGELY ENOUGH, A RED-BEARDED FELLOW AND MYSELF HELPED TO ORGANIZE THE FLIGHT CREWS THAT SERVICED THE CELESTIAL VEHICLES AND ARRANGED THEIR FLIGHT PLANS...
SAY NO MORE! I'LL BET THAT YOU AND REDBEARD BECAME LEGENDS TOO!
NEVER HEARD OF 'EM!


DOCTOR DAMIAN DOESN'T SHARE THAT VIEW! THE NAMES QUETZLECOATL AND TECUMOTZIN GOT HIM ALL WORKED UP!!
WHAT ARE YOUR NAMES?
I'M STEVENSON! THOSE TWO ARE TYLER AND PARKS!
HMPH!!


I MEANT FULL NAMES!
YOU'LL GET NO MORE THAN WHAT I GAVE YOU! THIS ISN'T A TEA PARTY! --AND WE DON'T PLAN ON STAYING LONG!!
THERE'S STILL AN ACE CARD TO BE PLAYED!!


STEVENSON'S LEFT HAND IS TIGHTLY CLENCHED AND HELD OUT OF SIGHT BEHIND HIS BACK! IF THERE IS AN ACE CARD, IT IS HIDDEN IN HIS FIST-- AND READY TO BE USED!!


THEN STEVENSON MAKES HIS MOVE! HE STUNS AJAK WITH A POWERFUL BLOW TO HIS JAW...
UGH!
GOT HIM!
WAM!
GO, STEVENSON, GO!!


THIS HAYMAKER SHOULD PUT HIM DOWN!
KRAK!
STOP! THIS IS MADNESS!

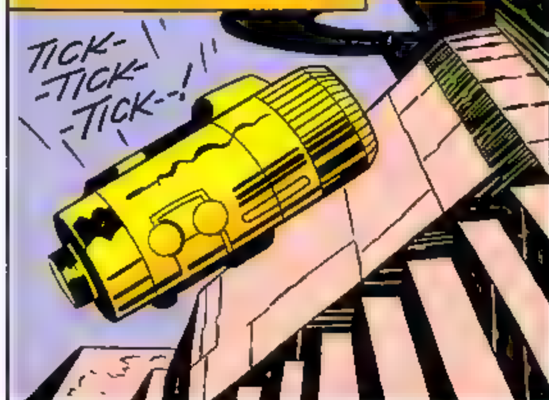

DOCTOR DAMIAN MAKES A FUTILE ATTEMPT TO INTERVENE... BUT HE IS NO MATCH FOR EXPERIENCED SHIELD AGENTS!!
EASY, DAD!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MEN ARE UP TO-- BUT I TELL YOU, IT'S USELESS!
WE'LL FIND THAT OUT SOON ENOUGH!! GOOD LUCK, STEVENSON!! REMEMBER TO TAKE COVER!
FOOLS!! FOOLS!!
WILL DO!

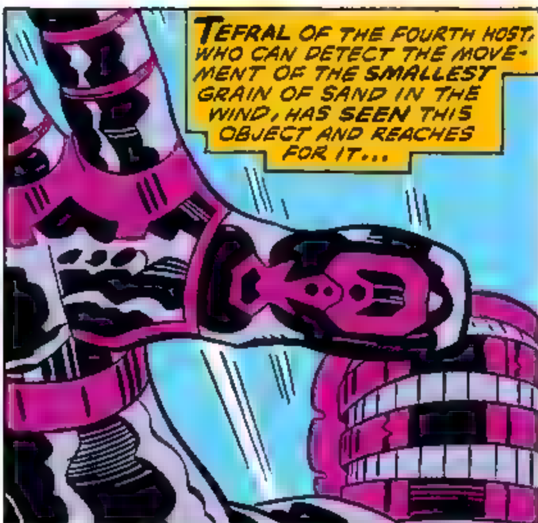

STEVENSON RACES UP THE STONE STEPS LEADING TO AN OPENING IN THE TEMPLE ROOF...
NOW WE'LL SEE WHAT THESE COCKAMAMIE LEGENDS ARE MADE OF!
SHIELD WANTS SOLID FACT, NOT OLD WIVES TALES!

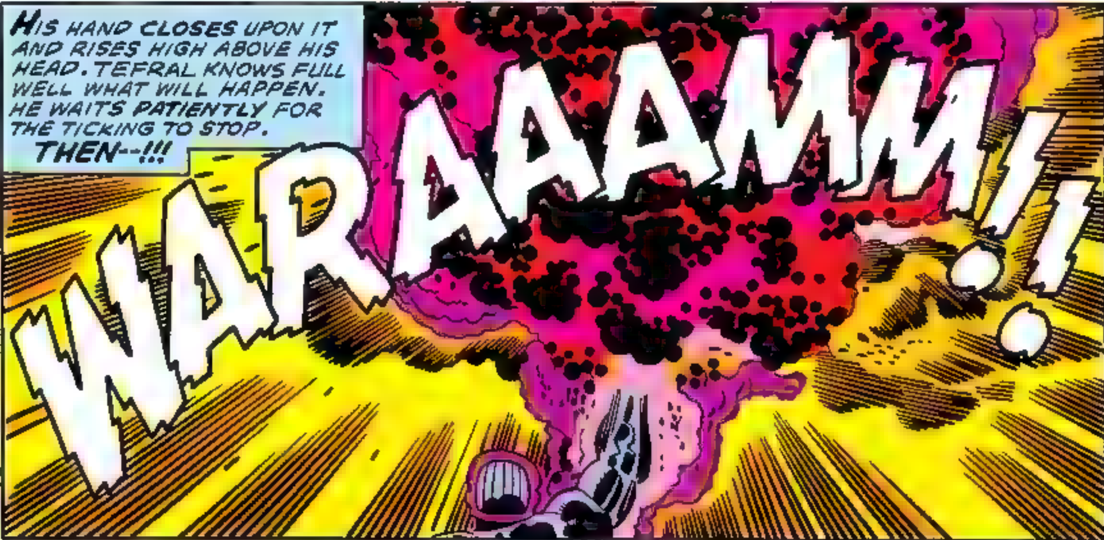

GODS, DEVILS, OR SPACE GIANTS --THIS TACTICAL NUCLEAR DEVICE WILL DECIDE WHAT THEY ARE!
TICK-TICK-TICK-TICK--

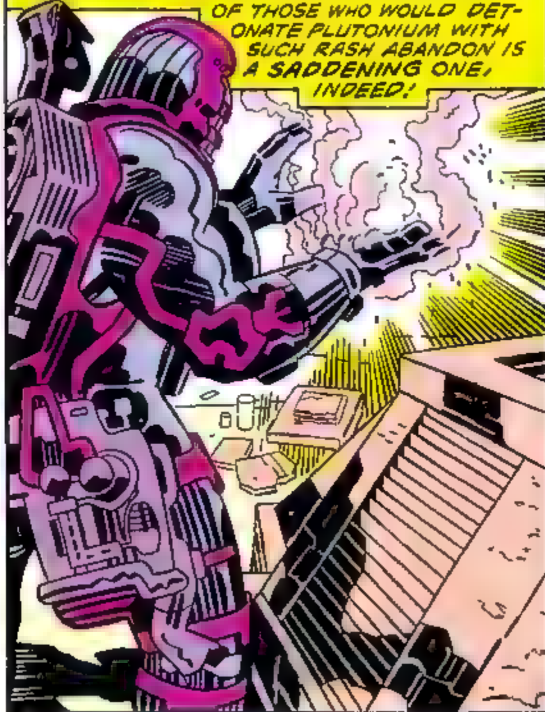

THE SMALL NUCLEAR BOMB FLIES FROM STEVENSON'S HAND THE MOMENT THAT ONE OF THE GIANTS COMES INTO VIEW...
CHEW ON THIS, MISTER BIG!!

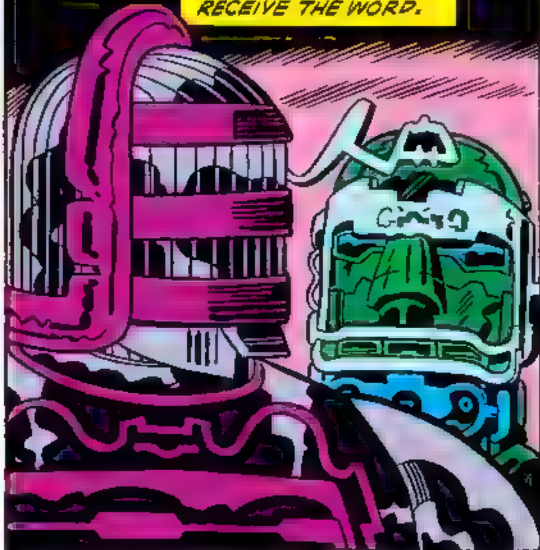

STEVENSON'S EAGERNESS TO WITNESS THE EFFECT IS SO STRONG THAT HE FOOLISHLY IGNORES THE URGE TO FIND COVER!! HE STARES IN WONDER AS THE BOMB COMPLETES ITS DEADLY ARC TOWARD THE ALIEN!!


SUDDENLY, THE BOMB'S MOMENTUM DIMINISHES UNTIL IT HALTS IN ITS FLIGHT!! THEN IT HANGS IN MID-AIR -- SUSPENDED AND ALIVE -- BEATING OUT IT SONG OF DOOM!!
TICK--TICK--TICK--!


TEFRAL OF THE FOURTH HOST, WHO CAN DETECT THE MOVEMENT OF THE SMALLEST GRAIN OF SAND IN THE WIND, HAS SEEN THIS OBJECT AND REACHES FOR IT...


HIS HAND CLOSES UPON IT AND RISES HIGH ABOVE HIS HEAD. TEFRAL KNOWS FULL WELL WHAT WILL HAPPEN. HE WAITS PATIENTLY FOR THE TICKING TO STOP. THEN--!!!
WARAAAMM!!



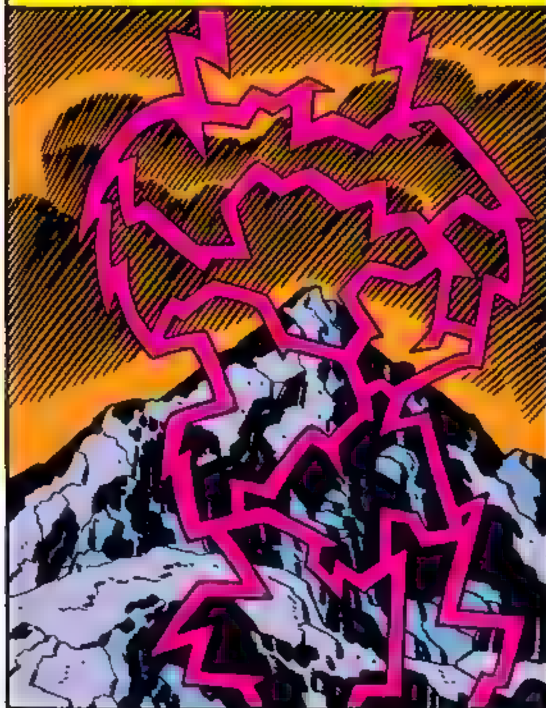


THE HOST ASSEMBLES AND STANDS OBEDIENTLY. THEIR BROTHERS ARE **MANY** AND STAND THUS ON A THOUSAND WORLDS WHERE THE SAME TASK MUST BE DONE. THE SEEDS OF **AWARENESS** ARE SOWN IN THE GALACTIC FIRMAMENT... THEY GROW WITH **GREAT** CLAMOR.

THEY REACH FOR THE STARS BUT THEY ARE FOREVER CUT DOWN BY THE FOURTH HOST!! THIS HAS PROCEEDED SINCE **BEFORE** GENESIS WAS WRITTEN...AND WILL CONTINUE UNTIL-- **THE DAY OF ALPHA**

ABOVE THE EARTH, IN FIXED ORBIT, THEIR CYCLOPEAN **SPACE HOME** HOVERS WITH SOMBER MAJESTY. INSIDE IT IS THE ONE ABOVE ALL. HIS WORD WILL SET THE TASK IN MOTION. IT WILL BE HIS WORD THAT WILL END IT...

HE SENDS DOWN HIS MESSAGE ON A LASER BEAM, **TEN BILLION YEARS EVOLVED**. SEEN ONCE **BEFORE** BY THE ANCIENT **EARTH**. IT WAS CALLED THE **LADDER OF FIRE!!**



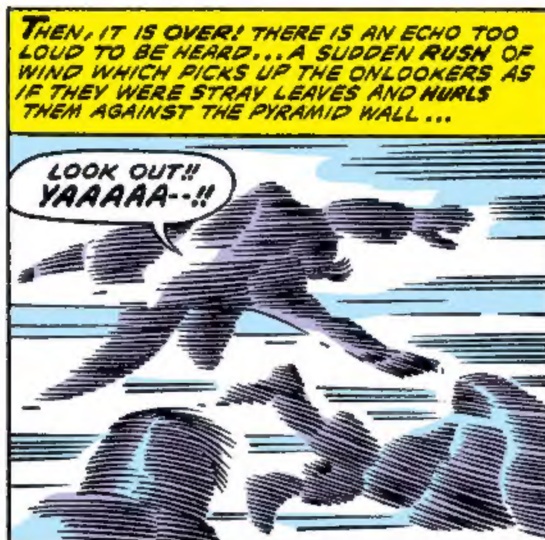
SEEN BY THE MODERNS, IT IS STILL A WONDROUS MATTER, CONSIDERING THE FLAMING, SNAPPING, **EVER-CHANGING** FORMS OF LIGHT WHICH MAKE THE HORIZON **RING** WITH SOUND --AND MEN FEEL THE PRESENCE OF THEIR **OWN** SOULS...




STEVENSON AND HIS MEN CLIMB OUT UPON THE PYRAMID'S LEDGE FOR A CLOSER LOOK AT THE CELESTIAL RITUAL...
I-IT'S JUST INCREDIBLE! THEY HANDLE A BOMBS LIKE ASPIRIN--! AND TALK IN WAYS THAT MAKE NASA LOOK LIKE A GRADE SCHOOL!!
YEAH... BUT THOSE ARE THE FRILLS! WHAT'S THE MEAT OF IT!!?
WHY ARE THEY HERE!?

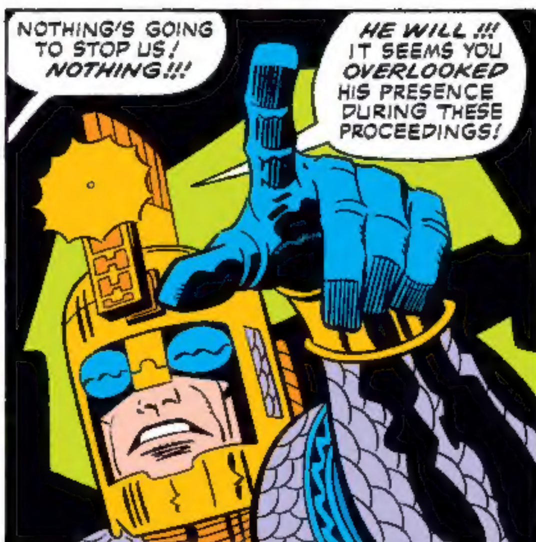

THE "LADDER OF FIRE" HAS NOW BECOME A BLAZING COSMIC PILLAR WHICH DISSOLVES THE STANDING HOST IN WHITE ENERGY...
LOOK! THAT THING IS ENGULFING THE GIANTS!
T-THEY'RE FADING OUT!!

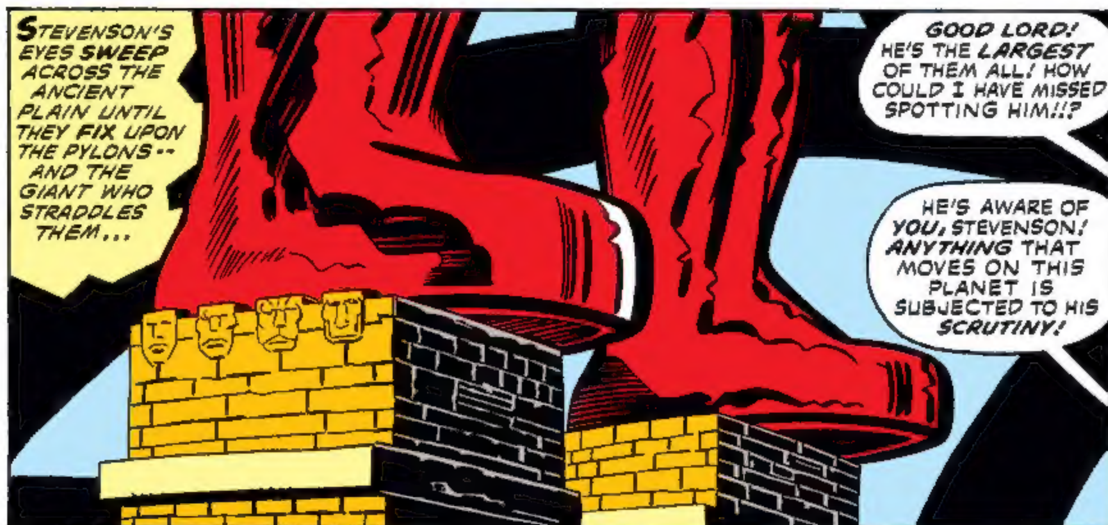

A MOMENT LATER, THE HOST HAS VANISHED! THEY HAVE ENTERED, AND ARE PART OF THE "WHEEL WITHIN A WHEEL." THEY HAVE BEEN TRANSLATED INTO THE BASIC FORM OF ALL MATTER!!
QUICK!! COVER YOUR EYES! T-THIS IS LIKE WATCHING TEN HYDROGEN BOMBS GOING OFF AT ONCE!

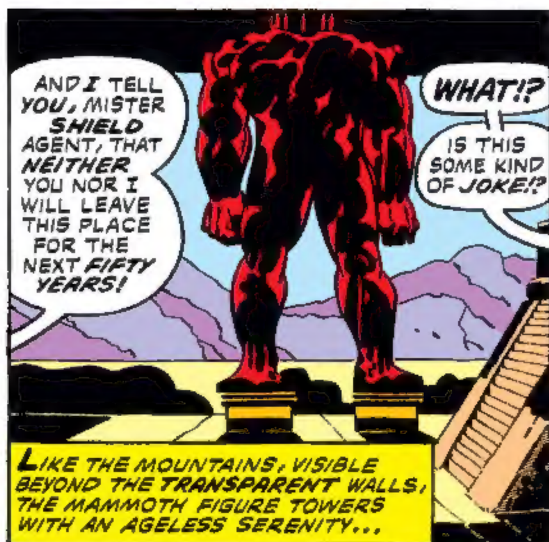

THEN, IT IS OVER! THERE IS AN ECHO TOO LOUD TO BE HEARD... A SUDDEN RUSH OF WIND WHICH PICKS UP THE ONLOOKERS AS IF THEY WERE STRAY LEAVES AND HURLS THEM AGAINST THE PYRAMID WALL...
LOOK OUT!! YAAAAA--!!

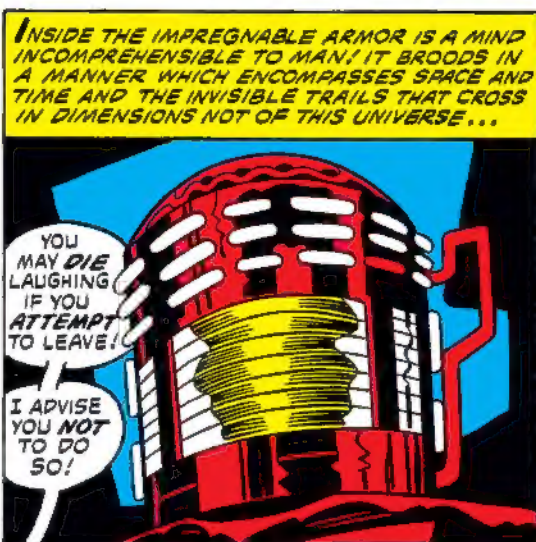

SILENCE... PAIN... AND SLOW RETURN TO A WORLD NOW FILLED WITH STRANGE PHENOMENA. STEVENSON IS FIRST TO GATHER HIS THOUGHTS...
W-WHAT WAS THAT THING? I-IT SWALLOWED THE GIANTS... AND NOW THEY'RE... GONE!!!
THEY HAVEN'T GONE! THEY'RE MERELY EVERYWHERE--! IN EVERY CORNER OF THE EARTH!
UGH--!


A-AFTER WHAT WE'VE SEEN HERE, MY MEN AND I MUST GET BACK TO SHIELD STARTING NOW!
IMPOSSIBLE, STEVENSON.


NOTHING'S GOING TO STOP US! NOTHING!!!
HE WILL!!! IT SEEMS YOU OVERLOOKED HIS PRESENCE DURING THESE PROCEEDINGS!


STEVENSON'S EYES SWEEP ACROSS THE ANCIENT PLAIN UNTIL THEY FIX UPON THE PYLONS -- AND THE GIANT WHO STRADDLES THEM...
GOOD LORD! HE'S THE LARGEST OF THEM ALL! HOW COULD I HAVE MISSED SPOTTING HIM!!?
HE'S AWARE OF YOU, STEVENSON! ANYTHING THAT MOVES ON THIS PLANET IS SUBJECTED TO HIS SCRUTINY!


AND I TELL YOU, MISTER SHIELD AGENT, THAT NEITHER YOU NOR I WILL LEAVE THIS PLACE FOR THE NEXT FIFTY YEARS!
WHAT!?
IS THIS SOME KIND OF JOKE!?
LIKE THE MOUNTAINS, VISIBLE BEYOND THE TRANSPARENT WALLS, THE MAMMOTH FIGURE TOWERS WITH AN AGELESS SERENITY...


INSIDE THE IMPREGNABLE ARMOR IS A MIND INCOMPREHENSIBLE TO MAN! IT BROODS IN A MANNER WHICH ENCOMPASSES SPACE AND TIME AND THE INVISIBLE TRAILS THAT CROSS IN DIMENSIONS NOT OF THIS UNIVERSE...
YOU MAY DIE LAUGHING IF YOU ATTEMPT TO LEAVE!
I ADVISE YOU NOT TO DO SO!


BUT, YOU'RE GOING TO TRY IT ANYHOW, AREN'T YOU!
GOT TO, AJAK... RISK IS A PART OF THE JOB... I'M SORRY I BELTED YOU... YOU'RE OKAY...
SO LONG, DOC...
GOOD LUCK, STEVENSON...

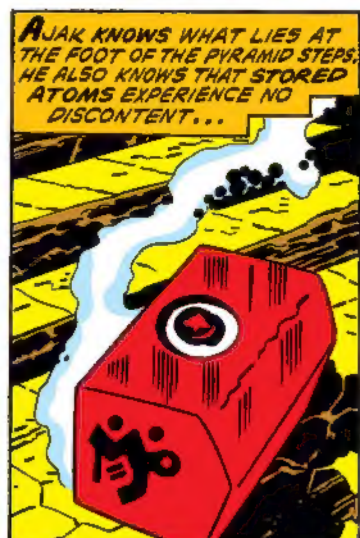

WARY OF THE IMMOBILE GIANT, THE SHIELD AGENTS RACE DOWN THE PYRAMID STEPS IN A BID FOR FREEDOM...
THIS IS IT, FELLAS! KEEP GOING! DON'T STOP UNTIL WE'RE IN THE CLEAR!
I'M HIP!


DOCTOR DAMIAN AND AJAK WATCH WITH SILENT ADMIRATION AND LEADEN HEARTS AT MAN'S CONTINUAL WILLINGNESS TO GAMBLE AGAINST MOUNTAINOUS ODDS!!
IT'S WRITTEN IN MYTHOLOGY THAT THE GODS ARE UNPREDICTABLE!! DO YOU THINK THOSE COURAGEOUS FOOLS MIGHT POSSIBLY--MAKE IT?
I AM AN ETERNAL, NOT A CELESTIAL! IT IS NOT MY WILL THEY DEFY!


THE ANSWER COMES SWIFTLY... IN A BLINDING, SEARING FLASH, FROM WHICH THE TWO RECOIL WITH INSTINCTIVE ACTION!
TTZZSSHH!


AJAK!! W-WHAT WAS THAT!? Y-YOU DON'T THINK--
NO, I DON'T THINK THOSE MEN ARE DEAD! BUT I'M QUITE CERTAIN THAT THEY DIDN'T ESCAPE...


W-WHAT HAPPENED? W-WHAT WAS DONE TO THEM?
NOTHING THAT WASN'T DONE BEFORE... BE ASSURED, DOCTOR, OUR VISITORS WILL SPEND THEIR NEXT FIFTY YEARS IN RELATIVE CALM!


AJAK KNOWS WHAT LIES AT THE FOOT OF THE PYRAMID STEPS; HE ALSO KNOWS THAT STORED ATOMS EXPERIENCE NO DISCONTENT...


ARISHEM, THE MIGHTIEST OF THE FOURTH HOST, HAVING ENFORCED HIS WILL, RAISES HIS MAMMOTH ARM TOWARD THE SKY. IT SIGNALS THE BEGINNING OF THE FIFTY YEAR JUDGMENT-- THE FINAL STAGE OF AN EXPERIMENT CARRIED OUT BY THE CELESTIALS, AMONG THE COUNTLESS STARS, ON COUNTLESS WORLDS LIKE EARTH, IN THE FOND HOPE OF GENERATING WHAT THE CELESTIALS TERM AS ALPHA DAY!
BUT ENDLESS TIME HAS PRODUCED ENDLESS FAILURE! THUS, ARISHEM STANDS READY TO DO WHAT HE HAS ALWAYS DONE.
HE IS A PLANET-KILLER!!
ENGRAVED ON HIS THUMB IS THE FORMULA FOR WORLD DESTRUCTION!!
IF EARTH FAILS.. EARTH DIES!!
NEXT! DON'T MISS IT!!! MYSTERIES AND MONSTERS IN THE
CITY OF THE TOADS